

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WINNIP 00145 291803Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-07 EPA-04 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00
DOE-15 SOE-02 CEQ-01 SP-02 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 INT-05 /070 W
-----025083 300621Z /11
R 291630Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL WINNIPEG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2190
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS WINNIPEG 145

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SENV, CA
SUBJ: POPLAR RIVER INQUIRY OPENS -- U.S. AND MONTANA
OPPOSITION HIGHLIGHTED

REF: STATE 68028

1. SASKATCHEWAN BOARD OF INQUIRY ON SECOND GENERATING UNIT ON
POPLAR RIVER OPENED MARCH 28 AT CORONACH. MORNING WAS CONSUMED
BY SASKATCHEWAN POWER CORPORATION (SPC) AND PROVINCIAL ENVIRON-
MENTAL PEOPLE EXTOLLING VIRTUES OF VIABILITY OF PROJECT AMIDST
ASSURANCES THAT BOTH CANADIAN AND SASKATCHEWAN ENVIRONMENTAL
STANDARDS ARE BEING MET OR EXCEEDED.

2. IN THE AFTERNOON, EXSTAFF'S ANNE PARK, READ DEPARTMENT'S
NOTE OF MARCH 14 (REFTEL) INTO RECORD. SHE PREFACED NOTE WITH
EXPLANATION THAT GOC HAD NOT YET FULLY CONSIDERED QUESTIONS
RAISED BY NOTE, NOR HAD THERE BEEN AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
FULL CONSULTATIONS WITH SASKATCHEWAN, SO EXSTAFF WAS NOT IN A
POSITION TO COMMENT ON IT. HOWEVER, SHE DID SPEND ABOUT FIFTEEN
MINUTES DETAILING THE HISTORY OF EXSTAFF'S INVOLVEMENT OVER THE
YEARS FOR THIS DISPUTE. (TEXT BEING POUCHED)

3 BOARD'S REACTION WAS A BIT UNEASY, NOT QUITE KNOWING HOW TO
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PAGE 02 WINNIP 00145 291803Z

QUESTION A CANADIAN OFFICIAL ABOUT AN AMERICAN POSITION. BOARD
MEMBERS ALSO ADMITTED BEING OVERWHELMED BY THE DETAIL OF MISS
PARK'S PRESENTATION. NONETHELESS, THEY WERE ABLE TO ELICIT
HER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT USC CONCERN OVER POPLAR RIVER WAS NEITHER
NEW NOR SURPRISING, AS SOME PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAD EARLIER
INDICATED TO THE PRESS.

4. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY BRIEF BUT INCISIVE SUPPORTING STATEMENT BY MONTANA LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR TED SWINDON WHO VIGOROUSLY BUT POLITELY REINFORCED IDEA THAT THERE ARE "COMPELLING REASONS WHY POPLAR RIVER UNIT NUMBER TWO SHOULD NOT PROCEED." IN RESPONSE BOARD WAS APPRECIATIVE OF SWINDON S TESTIMONY BUT FELT IT IMPROPER TO GRILL HIM ON TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF MONTANA'S OPPOSITION. IN ANY EVENT, IMPACT OF USG NOTE SUPPORTED IN SUBSTANCE AND SPIRIT BY HIGH MONTANA OFFICIAL WHOSE HOME TOWN IS ONLY 50 MILES SOUTH OF CORONACH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER TIMED FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT. LARGE SASKATCHEWAN PRESS CONTINGENT, WHICH COVERED HEARINGS IN ENTIRETY, PICKED UP THEME OF U.S.- MONTANA OPPOSITION AND PLAYED THIS AS LEAD STORY.

5. RE PARA 3A REFTTEL, ON MARCH 6 BOARD REQUESTED EXSTAFF'S COMMENTS ON CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, AND NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANY INTERNATIONAL IMPACT OF POPLAR RIVER NUMBER 2, BUT HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED REPLY FROM EXSTAFF.

6. RE PARA 3C REFTTEL, SO FAR WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT FEDERAL OFFICIALS ARE EXERTING PRESSURE ON SASKATCHEWAN TO ACCEDE TO REQUESTS FOR CHANGES IN THE SECOND UNIT, AND IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THIS WILL OCCUR HERE GIVEN PLAYERS ON HAND.

7. COMMENT: WHILE THERE APPEARS TO BE ALMOST NO OPPOSITION WITHIN SASKATCHEWAN TO POPLAR RIVER NUMBER 2, COMBINATION OF USG UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 WINNIP 00145 291803Z

AND MONTANA CONCERNS ARE GOING TO BE HARD FOR BOARD OF INQUIRY TO IGNORE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RIVERS, DIPLOMATIC NOTES, ELECTRIC POWER PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978WINNIP00145
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780137-0860
Format: TEL
From: WINNIPEG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780311/aaaaaizm.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: be9524b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 68028
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3126791
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POPLAR RIVER INQUIRY OPENS -- U.S. AND MONTANA OPPOSITION HIGHLIGHTED
TAGS: SENV, CA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/be9524b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014